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THURSDAY, DECEMBER 13, 1984 25¢

EPA orders 35 firms to clean waste

By JOHN T. WARD
Home News staff

PERTH AMBOY — Toxic and carcinogenic chemicals from up to 4,000 drums are leaking into the Arthur Kill from the site of the former Duane Marine Salvage Corp. here.

Federal officials have ordered 35 firms to begin removing the wastes by early next month.

A spokesman for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency yesterday said the firms have been told to secure the site by tomorrow and to provide for the safe removal and storage of the wastes, or the agency will do the work itself and bill the companies for up to three times the cost.

The EPA order also directs the companies to sample the contents of all drums, to dispose of all wastes at EPA facilities and to remove all tanks, drums and contaminated soil.

Among the firms named by the EPA as partially responsible for the "hazardous situation" at the site are

Duane Marine, American Can of Edison, Metz Metallurgical Corp. of South Plainfield, Inmont Corp. of Bound Brook, Lockheed Electronics of Plainfield, Midland Glass of Matawan and the Port Authority Trans Hudson Corp. of Jersey City.

"We are concerned about the potential for direct public contact with these wastes and want them removed without further delay," Christopher J. Daggett, the EPA's regional administrator, said in a prepared statement.

Rich Cahill, an EPA spokesman, said the agency's "primary concern" is about trespassers gaining access to the site and possibly starting a fire.

(In a related matter, the EPA yesterday increased to \$22.7 billion its estimate of the maximum cost to clean the nation's worst abandoned hazardous waste dumps — 41 percent higher than prior estimates. In a report to Congress, the agency offered the new figure as a worst-case

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BODIES RETURNED



Military pallbearers carry the flag-draped caskets of two American diplomats slain during the six-day hijacking of a Kuwaiti jetliner.

The bodies of Charles Hegna and William Stanford, late of the U.S. Agency for International Development, were flown to Andrews Air Force base, Md. Story on Page A3.

AP Photo

WASTE

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scenario. The cost could be as low as \$7.6 billion in a best-case estimate. Story on page A10.)

A portion of Duane Marine, a chemical waste-hauling and storage facility, was destroyed in a spectacular fire that consumed the Perth Amboy Industrial Center at High and Washington streets in July 1980. Nearly 2,800 of the 55-gallon drums containing chemical wastes reportedly were destroyed in the blaze.

Among the substances identified at the waterfront site are polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), benzene, chlorobenzene, trichloroethylene, trichloroethane and heavy metals. Cahill said some of those substances have been tested and found to be highly toxic and carcinogenic.

He said an undetermined number of the 3,500 to 4,000 drums remaining at the site is leaking hazardous substances into the Arthur Kill, the waterway separating New Jersey from Staten Island, N.Y.

Asked what danger the leaking might pose to residents, Cahill said, "It's not a good situation environmentally, but I wouldn't say it's a health threat."

Cahill said the EPA has been paying for security at the site since Nov. 29. He said the agency was called in

to respond to reports of leaks at the site in July, and Daggett decided to "take over enforcement and remedial action" in October.

But Cahill said he didn't know who had requested the federal agency's intervention. He referred all questions about monitoring of the site over the past four years to the state Department of Environmental Protection.

A DEP spokesman said he was unaware of the state's role at Duane Marine since the facility was abandoned after the 1980 fire. He said no information was available yesterday.

The projected cost of the cleanup, estimated by Cahill to be in excess of \$1 million, would be apportioned by the 35 companies among themselves. He said the EPA would assess up to three times the cleanup cost against the firms should they fail to respond.

"So far, we've had a good response from the companies," Cahill said. "We're optimistic, because they have been talking to each other."

He said any company that disputes its alleged responsibility in the cleanup "will have to prove it."

The order, issued under federal Superfund legislation, requires the 35 firms to submit a working timetable for the cleanup by Dec. 28. Work is expected to begin in early January. No deadline for completion has been established, Cahill said.

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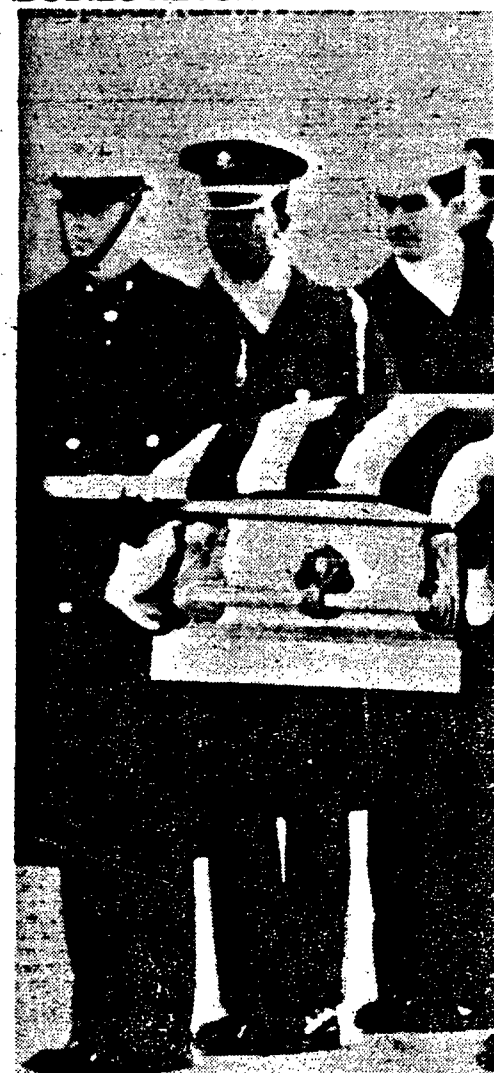
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Photo credit: [illegible]

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